

COMMISSION ACTION

NCPC File No. 6132



**PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE
SECURITY AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

FINAL PAVING MATERIALS

Pennsylvania Avenue between 15TH and 17TH Streets, NW, and
Jackson and Madison Places, NW
Washington, DC

Submission by the Federal Highway Administration

December 4, 2003

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of the third granite material for Pennsylvania Avenue pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)).

Commission Action

The Commission:

Approves the final granite material for the security and landscape project on Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House (between 15th and 17th Streets, NW, including Jackson and Madison Places), Washington DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.31(44.70)41250.

Deborah B. Young
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

Draft STAFF RECOMMENDATION

E. Miller
Draft (11/18/03)

NCPC File No. 6132



PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE IN FRONT OF THE WHITE HOUSE SECURITY AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS FINAL PAVING MATERIALS

Pennsylvania Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets, NW, and
Jackson and Madison Places, NW,
Washington, DC

Submission by the Federal Highway Administration

November 25, 2003

Abstract

On September 04, 2003 the National Capital Planning Commission approved the final site and building plans for Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, which called for landscape and security improvements to this important place. The final approval excepted out the third granite type proposed for the gutter along the southern curb line of Pennsylvania Avenue, the rustic asphalt pavements' aggregate color mix and binder, and the pavement type to be used in the expanded sidewalks on Jackson and Madison Places. The Federal High Administration has submitted the granite material for final approval; however, is still working to refine the asphalt materials. The FHWA will submit the asphalt pavements for final approval in the near future.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of the third granite material for Pennsylvania Avenue pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. §8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission **approves** the final granite material for the security and landscape project on Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House (between 15th and 17th Streets, NW, including Jackson and Madison Places), Washington DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.31(44.70)41250.

* * *

BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

Project Location

The project is located in President's Park on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, between 15th and 17th Streets, NW, and includes both Jackson and Madison Places.

Project Description

Granite

The entry thresholds at the eastern and western ends of Pennsylvania Avenue will be paved with 2-foot x 5-foot granite panels in the cartway and 4-foot x 10-foot granite panels within the sidewalk area. Three granites, having a mix of gray and pink tones, will be intermixed to provide a sense of depth and visual interest. Two of the three granite types previously received Commission approval, Deer Isle and Kershaw. The third proposed granite is Deer Brown. The proposed color ratio is 50 percent Deer Isle (lighter tone), 25 percent Kershaw (mid-tone), and 25 percent Deer Brown (darker tone).

Two-foot by 10-foot by six-inch Deer Brown granite slabs will be used for the curbs along the Pennsylvania Avenue sidewalks, except for the area in front of the park which will be reconstructed as a brick sidewalk with a granite curb and brick gutter. Two-foot by five-foot Kershaw and Deer Isle panels will be used as the gutter at the entry thresholds and along the southern sidewalk in front of the White House. In addition to the tree rows and light rows, the Deer Brown (darker granite) will form the top and face of the curb and the Deer Isle and Kershaw (lighter granites) will form the gutter, creating a high contrast edge to single pedestrians of the elevation change. (See Attachment I for an illustration).

While the granite paving imparts elegance, grace and formality and is appropriately used, it is perceived as a pavement used in modern times. To respect the historic context, the paving plan addresses the placement of the various granites so that they compliment and minimize visual impact to the adjacent structures. For example, the Kershaw (mid tone) and Deer Brown (darkest tone) granites will be used along the historic fence walls on the south side of the avenue where the adjacent walls have a warmer yellow or grey tone and the darker colors are more complimentary.

EVALUATION

The high quality granite materials reflect the dignity and importance of this place and will enhance the pedestrian experience; the materials will accommodate pedestrians, skaters, bikers, and horses, and withstand the loading requirements of delivery vehicles, emergency equipment, motorcades and inaugural parade elements. Additionally, the use of this material will not preclude the future reopening of the street to vehicular traffic, or the future construction of a tunnel under Pennsylvania Avenue. The granite material also reinforces the overall design intention to provide a transition between the naturalism of Downing's Lafayette Park and the open setting of the White House grounds, and respect the European formality of the L'Enfant Plan for the District of Columbia.

RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

On September 4, 2003, the Commission approved the final site and building plans for the security and landscape project, except for the materials outlined below.

- Granite type proposed for the gutter along the southern curb line of Pennsylvania Avenue.

FHWA has proposed a third granite type known as Deer Brown, the darkest of the three granite pavements. Two-foot by ten-foot by six-inch slabs of Deer Brown granite are proposed to line the curb along the sidewalk; the lighter toned, two-foot by five-foot granites (Deer Isle and Kershaw) are proposed to be placed along the gutter, except for the segment in front of the park where the existing granite curb and brick gutter will be replaced. During the design process it was determined that using the darker granite as the curb and the lighter granites as the gutter will best delineate the curb and define its edge.

- Aggregate color mix and binder for the asphalt pavement to be used between East and West Executive Drives and on Jackson and Madison Places.

FHWA has continued to prepare pavement samples of various aggregate size and color mixes to refine the rustic asphalt pavement. FHWA has not reached the desired combination and is continuing to test pours and sample pavements. FHWA anticipates that they will be ready to submit their proposed sample in the next 60 to 90 days.

- Pavement type to be used on the expanded sidewalks on Jackson and Madison Places.

The design intention for the expanded sidewalk pavers is to compliment the roadway paving, the brick sidewalks and the warm colors of the adjacent townhouses. FHWA must finalize the aggregate size and color mix of the rustic asphalt pavement before they can finalize their choice for the pavers. The expanded sidewalk paver will be submitted with the rustic asphalt pavement.

CONSULTATION

FHWA, in cooperation with NCPC, was the lead agency for the Section 106 consultation on this project. Many parties have been consulted throughout the planning and design development for the redesign of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House. The primary efforts are listed below in the order to most recent activity.

Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved the final materials, except for the rustic asphalt pavement and expanded sidewalk pavers, at its November 20, 2003 meeting. FHWA will submit the rustic asphalt pavement and expanded sidewalk pavers to CFA once they have prepared a sample that meets their design intention.

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on October 15, 2003. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the District of Columbia Department of Transportation, the General Services Administration, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

National Historic Preservation Act

In accordance with terms of the MOA, signed on September 3, 2003, FHWA held a 106 public consultation meeting on October 9, 2003, to review and obtain comments on the paving materials for Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House and Jackson and Madison Places. In addition, the terms of FHWA's agreement to monitor the vibration in adjacent historic structures during the construction phase were reviewed and approved. The terms of the MOA have been met. Interested individuals, planning and historic preservation organizations, and area stakeholders were invited to attend the meeting.

National Environmental Policy Act

NCPC staff analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in April 2003. The Commission staff participated in the development of that document, acting with delegated authority in that effort, as a cooperating agency. Staff prepared and completed, on May 30, 2003, a Finding of No Significant Impact based on the EA, concluding that the analysis was sufficient and demonstrated no significant environmental impacts from the planned action and its final design.